GROUND ZERO

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WE ARE ALL FAMILY

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PRESS RELEASE

PALMER HIGH CONTROVERSY STIRRED BY CFV

On Thursday, October 24th, there appeared in the *Lever,* the student newspaper at Palmer High School a news article on the cover that addressed problems and concerns of gay and lesbian youth. The article showed a great deal of humanity and reported accurately issues that gay students face. It wa neither pro or anti-gay. It was honest.

In the same paper, another author wrote an opinion piece on same sex marriage--an article that was insightful and well-meaning and an article that, like its companion on the front page, did not endorse or attack homosexuality but recognized one truth: Whether you agree with homosexuality or not, it is here--it is here to stay just as it has always been --and society would be better served to recognize this and learn how to approach and work with the issues and with gays and lesbians in a more humanitarian and logical way.

The articles fall well within state law regarding students rights and their protected right of freedom of speech in student publications.

When Ground Zero became aware of the publication of the articles on Monday, October 28 and on the ensuing controversy stirred up by Will Perkins, we placed a call to the Principal, Jay Engelen. We expressed to him our concern that the issue be given fair hearing and that we were quite comfortable with the whole issue being addressed within the school community without outside influence or the intervention of "thought [olice.". We also expressed that we really did not want the thing to blow up into a major event because we strongly support the bond issues and do not want anything to negatively affect their chance of passage.

Unfortunately, Will Perkins and the gang at Colorado for Family Values, desperate for an issue to recharge their sagging support, are not so inclined and have chosen to catapult the issue up to the full school board.

Obviously, we agree with the articles that were printed and we believe that you cannot make gays and lesbians disappear by denial and censorship. It is essential that gay and lesbian youth find access to non-judgmental counseling and positive role models to assist them in the process of coming to terms with who they are. They must learn that they have worth and value in society and that, contrary to the stereotypes of hate groups like CFV, they have much to offer humanity as is proven by those who have gone before them and who are alive today who are gay.

A study commissioned by President George Bush revealed that over 35% of youth suicides in America are among gay teens. Further studies have revealed that 50% of runaways on the streets are gay youth. A recent study of gay and lesbian youth found that 84% have been severely abused verbally and/or physically

because of their gayness. Legitimate studies indicate that gayness is determined, if not prenatally, certainly within the first 24 to 36 months after birth--before a child can reasonably be expected to make a conscious choice--and that said determination has nothing to do with the stereotypical dominating,, masculine mother and effeminate father. It also has nothing to do with being recruited and with being sexually abused.

The CFV's of the world fight against there ever be anything positive said about gays and lesbians and the contributions they make in society. They work to remove any such positive comments from library shelves, from books and, yes, from student newspapers. They do not likewise work to eliminate similar articles that repeat their lies, myths and stereotypes, gleaned primarily from the writings of quack, defrocked psychologist Paul Cameron, a man who has been kicked out of and/or denounced by just about every legitimate professional organization with which he has tried to associate for, among other things, unethical behavior, shoddy research methods and biased conclusions. He is the homophobes homophobe and has made a career of his phobia.

Ground Zero finds it amazingly coincidental that Will Perkins discovered the opportunity in the middle of this controversy to announce his endorsement of School bond issues 3 G and H. We also find it interesting that Dr. Kent Olvey, desperate to pass the bonds, emerged from a meeting in which Perkins told him of his support to launch an attack on the articles, using some of Perkins' well worn stereotypical language to justify his stand. We commend him for admitting that his pursuit of intellectual truth did not go so deep as to require him to read the articles before commenting on them.

Ground Zero nonetheless welcomes Perkins aboard with groups like Ground Zero that have supported the bonds from their inception and, indeed, that supported them the last time they were offered. While we question his motives and the motives of those who associate with CFV that have never demonstrated love or support for public education in the past, we embrace the endorsement for what it is worth in achieving passage of the bond issue. It is essential that we address now, for the good of our children, the pressing needs of School District 11, both in infrastructure requirements and for modernization of equipment. Our youth must be prepared to take the reigns in the next century. We, as a community, must accept and shoulder the burden of our responsibility to our children and pass 3 G & H. Blindly voting against bond issues and tax increases without applying the test of legitimacy and need threatens to destroy our city and our public schools.

On the question of the articles and Perkins' proposed "regulation changes" to keep them from being published in the future, I should point out to him that said right is clearly protected by state regulation--not local. I would like also to point out that some people who speak of supporting equality may be quite sincere in these statements. The problem is that they equate equality with sameness. It is the same confusion they have when they jump on the bandwagon of calling for a "Color Blind" society. Their definition of what this means and what Martin Luther King meant are quite different. Color blindness does not mean homogenization--does not require sameness.

The solution to the controversy should be in the school. If there are students who disagree with the articles, they should be given equal space to respond in the next issue. This, afterall, is the purpose of the paper; to promote discourse and to encourage thought--not to present a homogenized view that only promotes sameness. It is also the deomocratic way that fosters free thought and encourages free speech.

ATTRIBUTION AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

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1995 National Stonewall Award Recipient